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CHAPTER IV.

1765-1773.

*Protests by the Citizens of Philadelphia
against Taxation by the Parliament of
Great Britain. * * * Public Meeting
in the State House Yard to enforce the
return of the “dutied Tea.”*

* * * * *

AGAIN, in October, 1773, on the 16th, an immense public meeting was held in the State House Yard. It was called in consequence of the effort made by the East India Company to force upon the good people of Philadelphia tea which had accumulated in immense quantities in their warehouses in London, owing to the absolute refusal of the Americans themselves to import.

The direct effect of the action of the merchants of Philadelphia, followed as it was by those of New York, and indeed throughout the colonies, in adopting and enforcing “Non-Importation Resolutions,” had produced the repeal of the odious “Stamp Act,” though simultaneously with that repeal, Parliament had sullenly passed an act declaring: “*That the said Colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be subordinate unto and dependent upon the Imperial crown and Parliament of Great Britain, and that the King’s Majesty, by*

LIBERTY TRIUMPHANT; or the Downfall of OPPRESSION.



*"and with the advice and consent of the Lords, spiritual and temporal, and
"commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of
"right ought to have full power and authority to make laws and statutes of
"sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America,
"subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever."*

Many months were allowed to elapse, however, ere any attempt was made to exercise that power—when suddenly in 1767, an act was passed for imposing duties on glass, paper, painters' colors, and tea—the duties were trifling, but the discussions incident to the Stamp Act had opened the eyes of the colonists, generally, to their rights as freemen under the Constitution of England. In the guise of a plain farmer, John Dickinson, by a series of letters published in the newspapers, clearly demonstrated the necessity of resisting the imposition of a tax by the British Parliament, and pointed out that a free people are not those over whom only a government is reasonably and equitably exercised, but those who live under a government so constitutionally checked and controlled, that its exercise otherwise is rendered impossible. These letters, reprinted in book form, not only in America, but also in Great Britain, were ably seconded by the newspapers and by the decisive action of the merchants and traders throughout the country, and produced the repeal of this act, though an exception was still made by Parliament. That exception was the duty on *tea*, an article that even then had become a necessity, and had yielded to the East India Company £130,000, sterling, per annum. Relying upon the importance of this beverage, and apparently believing that, by reducing its price, the technical claim of "right to tax America," could continue to be made, an *export* duty was actually taken off, while a *smaller* duty on *importation* into the colonies was imposed, and even this was attempted to be covered up by requiring the payment in England, thus to the consumers the cost apparently was alone increased. The Americans were not to be taken unawares, nor yet to be overcome by the bribe; they detected the "snake in the grass," and forthwith set about crushing its head.

The news which reached Philadelphia at the end of September gave rise to an unprecedented commotion among the inhabitants, and, possibly to the now well-known expression of "a tempest in the tea pot," for to such "base uses" may the most solemn events be subservient. The Philadelphia papers teem with addresses to the Commissioners and to

the Public. Probably the most able is from Scævola, in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, of the 11th October. The Boston papers took up the refrain, and, on the 14th of the same month, "express the same sentiments in regard to the tea expected from London as the people of New York and Philadelphia, whose conduct they highly approve and strongly urge their countrymen to imitate. The masters of all their London vessels, too, they expect, like those of New York and Philadelphia, will refuse to bring any tea to America while the duty remains."*

*In BOSTON, on 3rd November, a meeting was held at "Liberty Tree," to enforce the resignation of the consignees of the tea intended for that city, which proved ineffectual, but resulted in another on 5th November, when the Hon. John Hancock, Esq., was chosen moderator, and at which it was—

"*Resolved*, That the sense of this town cannot be better expressed than in the words of certain judicious resolves, lately entered into by our worthy brethren, the citizens of Philadelphia." HERE FOLLOW THE RESOLVES OF THE CITIZENS OF PHILAD'A, OF OCTOBER 16TH, PRECEDING, AS GIVEN IN THE TEXT. IT IS ESPECIALLY NOTEWORTHY THAT THE HANDSOME COMPLIMENT THUS AND THEN PAID TO THE CITY OF PHILAD'A, IS TODAY RETURNED IN KIND, BY THE SELECTION FOR COMMEMORATION—AS THE SALIENT EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE DEFEAT OF THE "TEA SCHEME"—OF THE PATRIOTIC ACTION OF THE BOSTONIANS.

At this meeting it was also,—"*Resolved*, that it is the determination of this town by all means in their power, to prevent the sale of the teas exported by the East India Company," &c., &c. The Messrs. Clarke, Messrs. Fanenil & Winslow, as well as the Hutchinsons, all consignees of the tea, were evasive in their responses sent to this meeting, which declared them to be "daringly affrontive to the town." A renewal of a demand for their resignations at another meeting held on 18th November, also resulted in an equivocal reply, which was voted "not satisfactory."

On the 28th, the ship Dartmouth, Capt. Hall, eight weeks from London, with 114 chests of the long expected and much talked of tea, "actually arrived and anchored at the Long Wharf"; immediately appeared a notification for every friend of his country, to himself and to posterity, to meet at Faneuil Hall, to take action in the premises—but Faneuil Hall proved to small too hold the multitude which answered the call, and an adjournment was had to the "Old South Meeting House,"—where the sense of the meeting was declared. "That it is the firm resolution of this body, that the tea shall not only be sent back in the same bottom, but that no duty shall be paid thereon." As the consignees had professed a desire to give satisfaction to the town, the meeting "out of great tenderness to these persons, notwithstanding the time hitherto expended upon them to no purpose," adjourned over till the next day, the 30th November, in order to receive reply, but that proving no more satisfactory, promises were extorted from the Captain of the vessel, then in port, as well as the owner, and effectually to secure their compliance, a watch was then appointed for the Dartmouth, as well as for the expected vessels, to which equally they determined their resolutions should apply; then pledging each other to carry their votes and resolutions into execution at the risque

The following spirited resolutions were adopted at the meeting of 16th October, above referred to, at the State House, and appeared in the public prints on the 18th :

"Resolved, That the disposal of their own property is the inherent right of freemen ; that there can be no property in that which another

of their lives, they peaceably adjourned, after thanking those who came from the adjoining towns for their countenance and union with this body in this exigence of our affairs," and also Jona Williams, Esq., who presided as moderator at this meeting.

A few days afterwards arrived the "Eleanor," Capt. Bruce, with 116 chests, and then the "Beaver," Capt. Coffin, with 114 chests of tea. A caution was posted up throughout the town, that the granting of a permit to land, while it would betray an inhuman thirst for blood, would also in a great measure accelerate confusion and civil war. No effort was made to land the tea, the consignees themselves having taken refuge in "the castle," but egress from the Harbor was denied, and the alternative of destruction to the tea alone presented itself to the Patriots. At the meeting held on 16th December,—prolonged till candles were brought in—this fact became apparent, when suddenly from the gallery of the "Old South," the war whoop was raised by a person disguised as a Mohawk Indian, and a cry—"Boston Harbor a Tea Pot to-night!" and Hurrah for "Griffin's Wharf!" A significant motion to adjourn was immediately put, and carried, and the populace streamed to the place of rendezvous. A score or more disguised in sort of mongrel Indian costume, with faces blackened, accompanied by a posse of fifty, boarded the three vessels without molestation, and having broken open the boxes of tea with their "tomahawks," cast the contents into the water, and then dispersed quietly to their homes.

In NEW YORK, intimation was received as early as October 11th, of the consignment of tea to that port, and on the 15th, at a meeting at the Coffee House, grateful thanks were rendered to the patriotic merchants and masters of vessels in London, for refusing to receive from the East India Company on freight a quantity of tea, &c., in strong contrast with which, one Wm. Kelley, late of New York, and designated as infamous, who had undertaken to advise the sending of the tea to New York, and "the cramming the tea down the throats of his fellow-citizens," was hung and burnt in effigy at the Coffee House, with appropriate labels and insignia to indicate the contempt of the people, and the fate that awaited him personally if caught. An association termed the Sons of Liberty, was formed, and at a meeting at City Hall, on 29th of November, resolutions were passed similar to those of Philadelphia and Boston, with which cities they perfectly concurred, and rejecting the proposition then made by the government, of landing the tea and placing it in the Fort, while a warning to the citizens appeared, under the favorite pseudonym of the "Mohawks," against presuming even "to let their stores for the reception of the infernal chains," thus sought to be imposed upon the colonists.

Notwithstanding, however, this opposition and that of the good people of CHARLESTON the tea was landed at both places, but stored under the protection of the authorities, the consignees having refused to receive it. The firm stand taken by the citizens rendered it dangerous to attempt to expose it for sale, and it is believed none was sold.

can, or right, take from us without our consent; that the claim of Parliament to tax America is, in other words, a claim of right to levy contributions on us at pleasure.

2. That the duty imposed by Parliament upon tea landed in America is a tax on the Americans, or levying contributions on them without their consent.

3. That the express purpose for which the tax is levied on the Americans, namely, for the support of government, administration of justice, and defence of his Majesty's dominions in America, has a direct tendency to render Assemblies useless, and to introduce arbitrary government and slavery.

4. That a virtuous and steady opposition to this Ministerial plan of governing America is absolutely necessary to preserve even the shadow of liberty, and is a duty which every freeman in America owes to his country, to himself, and to his posterity.

5. That the resolution lately entered into by the East India Company to send out their tea to America, subject to the payment of duties on its being landed here, is an open attempt to enforce this Ministerial plan, and a violent attack upon the liberties of America.

6. That it is the duty of every American to oppose this attempt.

7. That whoever shall, directly or indirectly, countenance this attempt, or in any wise aid or abet in unloading, receiving, or vending the tea sent or to be sent out by the East India Company, while it remains subject to the payment of a duty here, is an enemy of his country.

8. That a committee be immediately chosen to wait on those gentlemen who, it is reported, are appointed by the East India Company to receive and sell said tea, and request them, from a regard to their own characters, and the peace and good order of the city and province, immediately to resign their appointment."

The East India Company, finding it impossible to induce the Americans themselves to import or even to receive the tea as freight on board of ships belonging to the American ports, in collusion with the Ministry, set about chartering vessels for the purpose, having determined in the language of the day "to cram the tea down the throats" of the colonists. These vessels were consigned to different parties in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston. Notice of the actual sailing, on the 27th of September, of the ship with its cargo of tea intended for

Philadelphia, was publicly given in the papers of the first day of December, and, as it was then hourly expected, the "Americans" were urged to "be wise—be virtuous." On the 27th of September the self-constituted Committee for Tarring and Feathering had issued handbills of the most friendly kind to the pilots on the Delaware river, admonishing them: "Do your duty if perchance you should meet with the (tea) ship Polly, Captain Ayres," and followed it up, as the vessel was actually reported off Cape May, by an address to the aforesaid captain, which, after a warning to desist from any effort to approach the city with his vessel, plainly promises, in case of his persistence: "A halter around your neck, ten gallons of liquid tar scattered on your pate, with the feathers of a dozen wild geese laid over that to enliven your appearance." In the meantime demands were made upon the commissioners to refuse the consignment. Equivocal responses were at first made by some, but finally they all yielded. A card, addressed to Messrs. James & Drinker, probably received no direct response. These gentlemen, however, had united with their fellow-citizens in protesting against the stamp act, and both had signed the non-importation resolutions of 1765; it is not likely, therefore, that such omission proceeded from any want of patriotism.* The card is still extant.

A CARD.

THE PUBLIC present their Compliments to Meffieurs JAMES AND DRINKER. We are informed that you have this day received your commission to enslave your native Country; and, as your frivolous Plea of having received no Advice, relative to the scandalous Part you were to act, in the TEA-SCHEME, can no longer serve your purpose, nor divert our Attention, WE expect and desire you will immediately inform the PUBLIC, by a Line or two to be left at the COFFEE HOUSE, Whether you will, or will not, renounce all Pretensions to execute that Commission?....THAT WE MAY GOVERN OURSELVES ACCORDINGLY.

Philadelphia, December 2, 1773.

*Abel James, the head of the firm of James & Drinker, who occupied the house of his father-in-law, Thomas Chalkley, immediately on the wharves, as represented in the old painting of Philadelphia by Peter Cooper, was waited upon by a crowd of citizens, and in response to a demand for his resignation then and there made, he gave the guarantee of his word and property that the tea should not be landed, but that the ship should go back to England; then pointing to his young daughter Rebecca, who stood near him, perched on the head of one of her father's hogsheads, he pledged her

The strenuous measures thus taken in Philadelphia in anticipation, were justified by the news received, December 24th, from Boston, of what had there occurred; the announcement was made in an extra of that date:

Friday Evening, 5 o'clock.

"Yesterday, (December 16th), we had a greater meeting of this body than ever, the country coming in from twenty miles round, and every step was taken that was practicable for returning the teas. The moment it was known out of doors that Mr. Rotch could not obtain a pass for his ship by the castle, (on the outward voyage), a number of people huzza'd in the street, and in a very little time every ounce of the teas on board of Capts. Hall, Bruce, and Coffin was immersed in the bay, without the least injury to private property. The spirit of the people on this occasion surprised all parties who viewed the scene."

We conceived it to be our duty to afford you the most early advice of this interesting event by express, which, departing immediately, obliges us to conclude.

"By order of the committee."

"P. S.—The other vessel, viz: Captain Loring, belonging to Messrs. Clark, with fifty-eight chests, was, by the act of God, cast ashore on the back of Cape Cod."

On Christmas-day, an express conveying intelligence of the arrival at Chester of the long-expected ship "Polly" reached Philadelphia. Immediately committees were dispatched to the commander. They succeeded in intercepting him at Gloucester Point, and, requiring him to come on shore, represented the general sentiments of the people, and desired him to accompany them to town to ascertain for himself their temper and resolution.

Yielding to their wishes, he reached Philadelphia in the evening. An announcement appeared the next morning, December 27th, at nine o'clock.

"The tea ship having arrived, every inhabitant who wishes to preserve the liberty of America is desired to meet at the State House, this morning, precisely at ten o'clock, to consider what is best to be done in this alarming crisis."

(*a vivum quadrum*) to the fulfilment of his promise. This young girl in after years married John Thompson, and was the grandmother of (besides several esteemed Philadelphians of the same name) John T. and George T. Lewis, gentlemen so well known on the wharves neighboring the transaction above related, and so esteemed as to need no pledges of any kind to fortify to their fellow-citizens their simple word of honor.

The crowd assembled, though upon notice of an hour only, is said to have been the largest ever, up to that time, collected, and the building being found inadequate, an adjournment to the Square took place. The resolutions that were adopted, were concise and peremptory :

Resolved. 1. That the tea on board the ship "Polly," Captain Ayres, shall not be landed.

2. That Captain Ayres shall neither enter, nor report his vessel at the custom-house.

3. That Captain Ayres shall carry back the tea, immediately.

4. That Captain Ayres shall immediately send a pilot on board his vessel, with orders to take charge of her, and to proceed to Reedy Island next high water.

5. That the captain shall be allowed to stay in town till to-morrow, to provide necessaries for his voyage.

6. That he shall then be obliged to leave town and proceed to his vessel, and make the best of his way out of our river and bay.

7. That a committee of four gentlemen be appointed to see these resolves carried into execution."

The meeting was then informed of the spirit and resolution shown upon this subject by the people of Boston, New York and Charleston, whereupon it was unanimously,

Resolved, That this assembly highly approve of the conduct and spirit of the people of New York, Charleston, and Boston, and return their hearty thanks to the people of Boston for their resolution in destroying the tea, rather than suffer it to be landed.

Though it was computed at the time that there were nearly eight thousand persons present at this meeting, the business was conducted with a degree of order and decorum which showed that the importance of the cause was duly felt.

Captain Ayres having been called out, pledged himself that the public wishes should be complied with, and the very next day, he was respectfully attended to the wharf of Messrs. James & Drinker by a concourse of people, who wished him a good voyage, and, "Thus," says a contemporary account, "this important affair, in which there has been so glorious an exertion of public virtue and spirit, has been brought to a happy issue, by which the force of a law, so obstinately persisted in to the prejudice of the national commerce, for the sake of the principle upon which it is founded, (a right of taxing the Americans without their consent) has been effectually broken, and the foundations of American liberty more deeply laid than ever."

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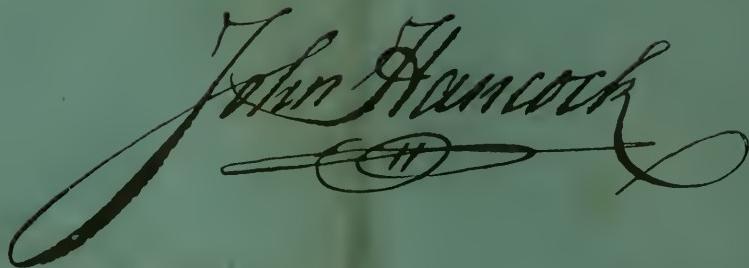
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